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Spooking the Spook- Namers

By Jeff Stein

It was during the craziest days of the early 1970s when the Movement had spun out of control and existed only on a single piston's worth of black comedy and third-rate street theatre. Vietnam vets taking over the Statue of Liberty and flying the flag upside down. Leslie Bacon bombing the men's room of the capitol. And then there were Ellen Ray and Bill Schaap, two crazy Americans way out there on the Pacific rim of the empire, in Okinawa, organizing workers at the big air base and helping GIs get out of going to Vietnam. And they had these kites . . . these kites to bring down B-52s, kites with tinfoil stringing from them that they'd fly right up there in front of these huge jets loaded with 10,000-pound bombs lofting off the runways of Okinawa on another run to the Mekong Valley. Bill and Ellen, standing there at the end of the runway with their kites, trying to lasso a goddamn B-52!

Ellen Ray is remembering all this 10 years later in the bar of the National Press Club in Washington, four blocks from the White House. Bill Schaap, now her husband, fills in the details. And across the table, Louis Wolf takes it all in with his permanently etched visage of gloom, suffering this interview and wanting only to be back in the womb of the National Archives, from where, every month, he emerges with another list of CIA agents ready for the pages of *Covert Action Information Bulletin*.

Wolf, Schaap, and Ray—along with former CIA agent Philip Agee—are the people who name the names of CIA agents. Every other month, they publish their *Bulletin*, full of in-depth articles about CIA operations and techniques. But it is the little section near the back of the book

that drives the intelligence agencies up the wall. This is the section where they update their lists of CIA staffs around the world—from Burundi to Bangkok. Along the way, they've published two books, *Dirty Work, The CIA in Western Europe*, and *Dirty Work (II), The CIA in Africa*.

They are driving everybody up the wall. *Everybody*. No matter that they get the names from poring through old diplomatic lists in the archives—just move your finger down the list of the Biographic Register till you find the guy who came into the State Department in '58, spent three years as an "analyst" with the U.S. Army in Laos from '61 to '63, "temporary duty" at the Pentagon in 1965, on leave in "private business" for another couple years, and then back to the State Department for duty in Chile when Allende was overthrown—it's easy enough for a seven year old to figure out who the spooks are, but Wolf and Schaap and Ray are driving people crazy.

And it's not just the CIA that has been trying to put them out of business. Members of Congress are so angry they've taken the First Amendment by the neck and strangled it with a bill, likely to pass soon, that will make it a crime—three years in jail, \$10,000 fine—to print the names of CIA agents *even if they've been gathered from public sources and printed before*. The first people to go to jail will be Schaap, Ray, Wolf, and Agee, once one of the CIA's best agents in Latin America, now an apostate in Europe, lobbing his books like grenades from across the Atlantic.

They've been asking for it, it's said, and now they're going to get it. The moguls of the editorial rooms hate them too. The

left? ACLU types shrink up to the microphones in the hearing rooms and make a wide turn around *Covert Action Information Bulletin* on their way to the First Amendment.

It's just that *Covert Action* is a little too well, *direct*. I mean, it's one thing to do your anti-imperialist trip putting out some nice little newsletter about, say, bank loans in Zaire. But that's not enough for Schaap, Wolf, and Ray. They go right down to Jamaica, hold a press conference, and rip the cover off 15 spooks in the U.S. embassy. Not five years after the government's been toppled, but *right now* while the CIA's doing it.

The CIA has been gritting its teeth over the *Bulletin* (and its predecessor, *Counterspy*) for nearly a decade, trying unsuccessfully through a series of maneuvers to put it out of business and its editors in jail. But it wasn't until last July that serious clouds of repression long on the horizon gathered into a furious storm. Somebody shot up the house of one of the CIA agents in Jamaica.

Suddenly, the "Intelligence Identities Protection Act" leapt from the discard bin, where it had been since 1978, and raced through both sides of Capitol Hill as fast as a congressional pay raise. By last month, super-patriots like Long Island Democrat Jerome Ambro were screaming about a death penalty for those who have access to classified information and leak it. (Presumably, Ambro will construct an amendment exempting Zbigniew Brzezinski.)

"Will this get Agee?" one senator asked Judiciary Committee Chairman Ted Kennedy as the bill was ramrodded through markup in the smallest room on Capitol

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Hill. "Yeah," grunted Kennedy, and that was that.

Wolf was in the room that day, peering over the heads of the press and the civil liberties lawyers, trying to see what was happening. After it was over, no one expressed condolences.

"There's no question that there's a problem there for a number of our friends," Ray concedes. "I mean, most of these people on the left remain our friends; but they don't want to be associated with naming names." The problems began, she acknowledges, with the murder of Richard Welch.

December 1975. Official Washington, and especially the intelligence agencies, are in a tumult. Nixon has been toppled by the CIA, many people are saying. The Church Committee, the Rockefeller Commission, and the press are dragging CIA skeletons out of the closet one by one: Cuba, the Congo, Chile, Brazil, Iran, Guatemala, Operations Phoenix, MKULTRA, and CHAOS. The assassinations, the drug testing, the mail openings, break-ins, and rounds of general sleaziness are turning the nation's stomach inside out, persuading an entire Kennedy generation that Green Berets and hot-shot spies are often more brutal than brilliant, more ham-handed than precise. Now the trenchcoat crowd has been thwarted in its try to stir up another mess in Angola.

In a little suite of offices off Washington's Dupont Circle, a small group of mostly ex-military intelligence officers has begun to publish a journal called *Counterspy*. In one issue in 1974, they noted the name of a CIA officer in Brazil, one Richard Welch. In late 1975, Welch is transferred to Athens as CIA station chief.

Counterspy notes the transfer in its December issue. Two weeks later, he is murdered; a left wing group takes credit for the hit. President Ford and half his cabinet meet Welch's casket at Andrews Air Force base, bury him in Arlington Cemetery in an elaborate, solemn ceremony, and the legislative wheels are set in motion to make it a crime to name the names of CIA agents.

Already, however, the CIA had set out to crush *Counterspy* and use it as an anvil for a broad attack on critics of the intelligence agencies: in background briefings, CIA spokesman Angus Thuermer blamed *Counterspy* for Welch's death. Such was the conclusion of former Kissinger aide Morton Halperin in a meticulous review of the Welch affair in *The Washington Post* on January 23, 1976. "It was a classic disinformation campaign," Halperin wrote. The CIA itself, Halperin reported, had warned Welch not to move into his house in an Athens suburb, a

house well known to have belonged to a succession of CIA station chiefs through the years. The political atmosphere in Athens when Welch arrived, moreover, was poisonous; with rising anti-American fever directed largely at the CIA. Amid a flurry of cables between Welch and CIA headquarters at Langley, Virginia, however, Welch rejected the advice. On Christmas eve, he was murdered.

"The disinformation campaign was a success," Halperin noted after reviewing the pertinent cables. "The stories filed out of Washington on Welch's death that night [by the press] all noted that he had been listed in *Counterspy*. None mentioned the CIA warnings to Welch as to his place of residence."

It was about the time of the Welch episode that Ellen Ray and Bill Schaap returned from Okinawa and began to get involved with research for *Counterspy*. For Ray, it was not really a long way from Nebraska.

One of the first things she remembers when asked about Nebraska is the day she was dragged into her elementary school principal's office and threatened with suspension because she missed a day of classes. The reason? Her father had taken her to hear a Truman cabinet member speak. The only permissible absence from school would have been to hear a Republican. After that it was the University of Nebraska and graduate courses at Harvard. She was "a hippie before there were hippies. And I think I was always a radical. My parents were sort of populists. My father had Harvard law and business degrees, but he was fed up with it all and became a farmer." One of those Harvard summers she spent traveling from Madrid to Rome to Paris. "It was during the Algerian War. Every day there were bodies floating down the Seine."

She wanted "to be a great writer." She moved to New York and landed a job writing for *True Confessions*, *Romance*, and *Silver Screen*. "I wrote things like 'Can God Forgive an Adulteress?'" she laughs, "What Six Boys Did To Me in the Grass," and "I Was 16 and Stripped Naked at the Senior Prom."

And then there was the Kennedy assassination. Soon, she started work on a film about the assassination with New Orleans D.A. James O. Garrison, and the late-night telephone calls began. "There were these Spanish-accented voices," she says. "They said 'you better get out of the country.'"

It was during her film work that she met Bill Schaap. A lawyer in partnership with brothers David and Sam Lubell, the "Red Twins of Harvard" (so named for being the targets of a special HUAC investigation), Schaap signed on as an attorney for a "hippie, nudie, political western" she was making in the desert called *Gold*.

Schaap was involved with the left wing National Lawyers Guild and the two soon hitched off for Asia, first to the Philippines; later to Okinawa, representing GIs under the aegis of the Pacific Counseling Service. Louis Wolf had already been in the Philippines for a few years.

Manila was the major forward base for the war in Vietnam. Commercial airliners at Clark Field jockeyed for taxi space with the huge fleet of Air America transport planes ferrying guns and rice to Saigon, DaNang, Hue, and the Meo tribesmen carrying on the CIA's "secret war" in Laos.

It was no secret to Wolf. A Quaker from a wealthy Philadelphia family, Wolf had been a conscientious objector and joined International Voluntary Services to do alternate service among the refugees of Laos. From 1964 through 1967, he tried to bring reading, rice, and well-digging skills to the Meo and other Lao peoples. Later, he would wonder whose grand design he was serving, but for the moment his anger merely churned under the daily barrage of napalm and B-52 blockbusters: the people and villages he had tended disappeared from the map. Wolf eventually gravitated to the Philippines and forged his anger into a talent for meticulous, unrelenting research.

"It wasn't until we went to the Philippines, and we started traveling around the world," Schaap comments, leaning back in his office in the National Press Building, "that I got to see the international scope of U.S. imperialism. I mean, it isn't until you go to poor, third world countries that you see what the effects really are. My feeling grew that it was terrible the way the U.S. interfered in all these countries, and that feeling led to an understanding that the worst of the interference was being done covertly, through the CIA, as opposed to Coca-Cola opening up a factory. The major difference is the awareness of the people affected. The people can see Coca-Cola and decide to oppose it or not oppose it."

Two events in 1973 further propelled all three of them toward the limelight. One was the U.S.-backed military coup that crushed the elected socialist government of Salvador Allende in Chile. The other was the publication of Philip Agee's *CIA Diary*. Agee, a Jesuit, had been one of the CIA's most talented case officers, fomenting strikes, paying off politicians, and planting CIA news stories across Latin America. Like a modern-day St. Paul blown off his mule on the road to Tarsus, Agee's turnabout was complete: the book drained his mind of every agent, code name, and cover operation he could remember.

Agee and Wolf met in 1970. Wolf was then part of a research collective of Americans and Europeans studying the operations not only of the CIA, but British and French intelligence as well. Agee was there avoiding the Justice Department. "Phil's role," Wolf explains, "was not that of a catalyst so much as that people came to him with information and asked him what he thought of it. 'Is this the way they work? Does this ring true?' And so on. He didn't have so much to do with gathering the names as the intelligence people like to suggest. And of course he could speak of his experience in Latin America, which ended in 1970."

CIA people like to brand Agee as a "defector" and the bunch at *Covert Action Information Bulletin* as Soviet dupes, characterizations that turn out to be rather ironic. Among their friends on the left, in fact, there is considerable consternation over the backlash naming names has wrought. The argument is made that if there weren't a *Covert Action Information Bulletin* to kick around, the CIA would have to invent one in order to mobilize public opinion in favor of the intelligence agencies.

Schaap, Ray, and Wolf are familiar with these comments, coming more often than not, from longtime friends. Schaap's response: "If you agree that CIA operations and the people doing it should be exposed, then you can't convince me the best way to do that is *not* to do it, because if you do it they *might* pass a law against it. I mean, you do it as much as you can." He pauses to savor the point, then adds, "In the last century, there were laws that said it was a crime to suggest there should be a union. Even to *suggest* it."

All of them argue that just because Congress has not been holding public hearings on CIA misdeeds for five years and the press has generally retrenched on the intelligence issues, it doesn't mean covert U.S. intervention in the third world has come to a halt. As Wolf argues: "The most provocative thing is not what we do, but what the CIA does." Jamaica proved a testing ground for Wolf's thesis.

On July 4, following Wolf's naming of 15 U.S. embassy personnel he said were CIA officers, unidentified attackers sprayed automatic rifle fire into the home of Richard Kinsman, named by Wolf as CIA station chief. For the past two years, Jamaica had been embroiled in a tightening knot of food shortages, strikes, and violence reminiscent of conditions created by the U.S. in its secret campaign to topple Allende. During this time, socialist Prime Minister Michael Manley, who had won a second term in 1978, was fighting an unsuccessful battle with Western-dominated international lending institutions to finance a refitting of the Jamaican economy, to make it less dependent on imports by diluting foreign ownership of its prime

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the hostility of the multinational corporations and banks to his plans for "democratic socialism" and the repeated attacks in the opposition press that Jamaica had become a satellite of Havana.

Wolf, Schaap, and Ray detected in Jamaica another destabilization campaign orchestrated by the U.S. Invited to Kingston by representatives of the Jamaica Workers Party—to the left of Manley's People's National Party—Wolf held a press conference and laid the names of CIA agents previously identified in *Covert Action Information Bulletin* out on the table. Kinsman's house was subsequently raked with gunfire.

Schaap suspects the whole incident was set up by the CIA. "All we know," he says, "is that it looks completely like a phony. If it was a legitimate attack, it was the most silly, bumbling attack one has ever heard of. The thing about bullets whistling through the baby's bedroom! I mean, the whole family was away on vacation!"

"The other thing was that all the reports here said that the house had been bombed. Now the facts of that from Jamaican papers was that in front of the house, in the lawn about 30 yards from the house, was a hole about the size of a grapefruit. That was picked up here as 'a bombing.' I mean, that could have been a dog burying a bone. Bullshit! Do you bomb a house by dropping a grenade on the lawn a half a football field away from it? Nothing rang true about that."

What is true is that legislation to outlaw the naming of CIA agents suddenly found new momentum and sailed through a complex of House and Senate committees.

"Well, great," Schaap retorts impatiently. "If we didn't do it, they wouldn't have to pass a law against it." Adds Wolf: "There are those who say we should've kept our mouths shut in Jamaica, but it seems to me just the reverse, because of the nature and scale of what we discovered there comparable to Chile."

"When the U.S. gives military aid to South Africa, Chile, or El Salvador," Schaap says, "that you can discuss as a public issue. You can argue against it. But when the CIA is doing it secretly, as in Jamaica, that kind of debate never occurs, because it isn't happening in Congress and it never will."

Whether the Kinsman incident was manufactured by the CIA or not, *Covert Action Information Bulletin's* relentless naming of names still begs the "what if?" question. What if a CIA man or woman is killed subsequent to his or her name popping up in the pages of the *Bulletin*?

To this question, Wolf, Schaap, and Ray respond with a cool directness worthy of their adversaries. "We've named thousands of agents so far and it's never happened," says Wolf. "I'm not saying it can't, but in any event we are inalterably opposed to assassination of CIA personnel."

for one thing, it gives them a martyr. But the question is: was that person hurt because of his activities in that country or because of us?"

The question troubles Wolf only momentarily. "As CIA people know," he adds, closing off his response, "when they take an assignment abroad they are putting their lives in jeopardy."

In the end, alarms issued forth by the intelligence community over *Covert Action Information Bulletin* may be so much smokescreen. Checking his lists, Wolf found that "better than half" the CIA officers under cover in U.S. embassies around the world continue in their assignments after they're named in the *Bulletin*. But, he says, "their effectiveness is reduced in terms of recruiting and bribes, and that's what we want to do."

The intelligence identities protection legislation is scheduled for floor action in the lame-duck session of Congress. If passed, it will be a crime to publish names from public sources, such as the State Department's Biographic Register, even if the names have been in print before. It will be a crime to name names if the effort is not "well-intentioned," such as in a general newspaper story or the research report of some high-toned think tank. And it will be a crime for a political group to uncover an FBI or CIA informant in its ranks.

The initial enthusiasm of the establishment press for the bill confounds Schaap. "It's incredibly stupid," he says. "For more than a year now, we've been saying to the press that there's no such thing as a bill against us and not against you. And every one of these major media has contacted us for the names of CIA agents in the past. After the hostages were taken, for example, every major media was in touch with us asking who the CIA people were in the embassy (although we made a decision not to give out the information). But the hypocrisy of saying how terrible we are! I mean, every one of these newspapers and networks have reporters on their staffs who were in touch with us all the time when they wanted information."

Schaap shakes his head. Ray lights a cigarette, her usually bright eyes now dull with anger. Wolf slumps sadly in his seat, his arms crossed on his chest.

"Now all the papers have come out against the bill except the *Washington Star*," Schaap says. "But it's a year too late. A year too late."

There is nothing left to say. We get up from the table and wind our way out of the pressclub bar through a throng of Washington reporters. On the color television in the corner, there is a flickering scene of Iraqi jets attacking Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran.

Nobody is watching.



Bill Schaap, Louis Wolf, and Ellen Ray: "if they get us they'll get you"